

WISSENSCHAFTLICHE KURZMITTEILUNGEN

**The type locality of *Cynictis penicillata coombsii* Roberts, 1929  
and *Gerbillus paeba coombsii* Roberts, 1929**

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ROBERTS (1929) described two taxa, *Cynictis penicillata coombsii* (p. 90–91; synonym of *C. p. penicillata* – MEESTER et al. 1986) and *Gerbillus paeba coombsii* (p. 98–100; currently *Gerbillurus paeba coombsi* – MEESTER et al. 1986) from the farm Swarthoek (22° 59' S; 29° 53' E), in the Zoutpansberg District, northern Transvaal, South Africa. Both holotypes were collected in 1927 by Mr. CECIL COOMBS, and catalogued in the Transvaal Museum by AUSTIN ROBERTS (*C. p. coombsi*: TM 4877, old male, coll. 18th April, 1927; *G. p. coombsi*: TM 4898, old male, coll. 19th June, 1927). The name Swarthoek (or Zwarthoek, in the older spelling) appears on the specimen labels, accession register and catalogue cards, as well as in subsequent publications by ROBERTS (1951) and later workers (ELLERMAN et al. 1953; MEESTER et al. 1986). In his description of *G. p. coombsi*, ROBERTS (1929:99) refers to this locality as being “west of the Sand River and a little north of the [Zoutpansberg] mountain range”.

On a recent visit to the area by one of us (P.J.T.) it was established in conversation with an elderly farmer, Mr. VIVIAN FOURIE, of Farm Dorpsrivier, Waterpoort, that Mr. COOMBS had owned the farm Swarthaak, on the flats just north of the Zoutpansberg Mountain Range and west of the Sand River (22° 52' S; 29° 28' E). Swarthoek, on the other hand, lies east of the Sand River, on the southern slopes of the Zoutpansberg Mountains, just north of Louis Trichardt, some 60 km south of Swarthaak.

Both *C. penicillata* and *G. paeba* are almost exclusively confined to the South West Arid zone (DAVIS 1962), occurring on a sandy substrate throughout their range. Swarthoek, on the southern slopes of the Zoutpansberg, would therefore be a most atypical habitat for both species. On the other hand, the area north of the Zoutpansberg, in which Swarthaak is located, is characterised by the occurrence of a relic block of Kalahari sands, and the associated fauna is more typical of the Kalahari Desert in Botswana than of the northern Transvaal Savanna, including both *C. penicillata* and *G. paeba*, as well as the Gemsbok, *Oryx gazella*.

Considering the fact that Mr. COOMBS owned the farm Swarthaak, and not Swarthoek, that Swarthaak offers a suitable habitat for both species while Swarthoek does not, and that Swarthaak (but not Swarthoek) lies west of the Sand River and north of the Zoutpansberg, the conclusion is inescapable that ROBERTS for some reason recorded the wrong farm name as type locality for these two taxa. Accordingly we designate Swarthaak, and not Swarthoek, as type locality for both *C. p. coombsi* and *G. p. coombsi*.

**References**

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